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General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Monday, 22 September 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lacayo (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

It is a principle of today's world that political legitimacy and democracy constitute the most civilized form of government. The United Nations must reflect this increasingly universal principle by supporting the efforts being made by the Governments and peoples of the world that are struggling to democratize their countries.

After a decade of totalitarianism and struggles of resistance, the Nicaraguan people have chosen democracy as our system of government. Proof of this is the elections that were successfully conducted in 1990 and in 1996, when I was elected President of Nicaragua and undertook to build a state of law and to lead my country along the path of democracy, reconciliation with justice and the institutionalization of the State.

We know that this is a difficult challenge. The Government over which I preside has made the commitment to achieve economic and social development that will make it possible to meet the basic needs of the population and to guarantee sustainable growth in the medium and long term.

We are aware of the need to promote a national commitment to democracy. To that end we have initiated an open, sincere national dialogue with different sectors of society, including the political parties, civil society and non-governmental organizations, so that together we can find the key elements for building a democratic political culture.

My Government is pleased to support the hemisphere's efforts, as coordinator of item 18 on the agenda of the Summit of the Americas, "Strengthening of the role of women in society". The Summit meeting wished to emphasize that the exclusion of women from the tasks and benefits of development is a big obstacle to the attainment of growth and democracy.

The entire world is in a process of change, and we believe that the United Nations system cannot remain on the sidelines. Nicaragua congratulates the Secretary-

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General on his dynamic vision, and we thank him for his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/51/950).

Nicaragua has benefited from many programmes of the system and its agencies, programmes which have had an impact on its economy, health, social well-being, education and employment, to name just a few areas, and ultimately on democratic development.

My Government considers the time has come for Member States to approve a greater leadership role for the Secretary-General. We are glad that the Secretary-General attaches special importance to peace processes and the need to improve the system's capacity to combat drug trafficking and terrorism. We support programmes to reduce arms and enhance human rights, as well as to strengthen the ability to respond in the best possible way to emergency situations. Likewise, my Government considers that development programmes and programmes for strengthening democratic systems must not be affected. Our democracies still have enemies. A rapid response capacity is essential today.

The Security Council's present structure and its Members' prerogatives belong to a bygone era. The days of the cold war and a bipolar world are a thing of the past, and the number of States making up the international community has increased substantially since 1965, the date of the last enlargement of the Council. It is therefore clear that its present structure is neither equitable nor democratic.

The days of armed conflict in the Central American region are over. In this very forum, all the nations of the world have declared Central America to be a region of peace, democracy and development. Fortunately, we Central Americans are daily getting closer to real and effective integration.

We are aware of the urgent need to bring about profound change in our institutional system in such a way as to respect our sovereignty, and laws, and the different characteristics of each nation, while allowing us to face effectively the challenges of the next century and to blend successfully into global flows of trade and investment.

Deeply resolved, the Central American Presidents have agreed to initiate a process of gradually establishing the Central American union. To that effect, we announced in Managua on 2 September the decision to designate a high-level group to prepare the bases and the conditions for constituting the union. We ask the international community to support this process unreservedly, for we consider it invaluable for the strengthening of our democracy and the well-being of our peoples.

We Central Americans do not want the destructive consequences of war experienced in the 1980s to continue into the twenty-first century. We still face humanitarian and economic problems because of the damage caused by the presence of landmines and other explosive devices, which have caused irreparable losses to the civilian population and the national economy.

The United Nations has seen profound changes in world events, including great transformations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. We are pleased to see how democracy, the ideas of civil society and respect for fundamental human rights are becoming predominant characteristics of today's world.

I therefore note with great regret that the 21.5 million people who live in the Republic of China are not represented in this great Assembly. What is going on, Mr. President? Everyone knows that the Republic of China signed the United Nations Charter in 1945. Domestically, it maintains government structures guaranteeing its people the exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms. In no international forum dealing with this subject has the Government of the Republic of China been described as a violator of inalienable rights. The countries of South-East Asia have seen how the economy and democratic development of the Republic of China have been significant factors in the region's stability. The international community can attest to the fact that the Republic of China bases its attitude on the principles that govern the United Nations Charter, particularly in its peace-loving nature and its capacity to make a positive response to the needs of the international community.

Bearing these facts in mind, I appeal to the Assembly to amend resolution 2758 (XXVI), which excludes the Republic of China from the United Nations. We ought to maintain the principle of universality through the equal participation of all the States of the world. The Government of Nicaragua considers that the Republic of China should enjoy equal opportunity to participate in the United Nations and its specialized agencies. We cannot forget the right of those who freely chose to live in and to build the Republic of China and who want their country to be recognized with full and effective participation at the heart of this Organization.

We have a broad programme of work, which will contribute not only to overcoming the obstacles that peoples and Governments face in achieving their goal of maintaining and implementing fundamental values of development, social well-being and justice, but also to preparing for our entry into the twenty-first century with a renewed and strengthened world Organization that can assist Governments to attain the well-being of their peoples.

On behalf of the Nicaraguan people, I ask God to bless the United Nations and all the peoples of the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, President of Ukraine

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kuchma (*spoke in Ukrainian; English text furnished by the delegation*): Mr. President, it is with pride that I congratulate you, a representative of Ukraine, on your election to the international community's highest political post. I am confident that you will use to the full your rich political experience and internationally recognized diplomatic skills, as well as your profound knowledge of the United Nations system, to which you have devoted more than 20 years of your life, to the benefit of mankind.

I wish also to address words of gratitude to representatives of all United Nations Member States for their support of the candidature of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for the honourable and responsible position of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We interpret that support as a manifestation of a high level of confidence in Ukraine's foreign policy, its peaceful initiatives and its commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and to the objective of reviving and strengthening the Organization. We regard it also as recognition of Ukraine's contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, to the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, to the promotion of the noble principles of democracy in international life and of respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Allow me also to pay a tribute to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, Mr. Razali Ismail, who made a notable contribution to the Organization's progress along the path of reform.

The recent history of the United Nations and the history of the development of independent Ukraine have much in common. The first common feature is that both my State and the United Nations are now experiencing the complicated process of internal reform. Profound, comprehensive change is proving to be an extremely difficult matter. But the choice is final and irreversible: Ukraine has become a democratic State with a policy aimed at ensuring the needs and rights of its citizens, and at establishing a civil society. There is every reason to conclude that during our six years of independence we have laid the foundation of further State-building.

As early as next year we will certainly experience gradual economic growth and the forging of a socially oriented market economy in Ukraine. All the conditions now exist for this to become reality, both internal — as illustrated by the political stability in Ukraine — and external.

Ukraine has consistently conducted, and is determined to continue, a policy aimed at strengthening security and stability throughout the world. I would recall that last year we removed the last nuclear warhead from our territory, thus transforming a nuclear-weapon State to a non-nuclear-weapon State for the first time in history. Ukraine thus demonstrated its good will, proved that genuine nuclear disarmament is possible, and made a substantive contribution to the achievement of the ideal of a nuclear-weapon-free world in the twenty-first century.

No less significant is my country's contribution to radical positive changes in the Central and Eastern European region, creating favourable conditions for a new, more stable and more secure geopolitical situation throughout the continent.

Important steps in that direction included the basic political treaties that Ukraine has signed with the Russian Federation and with Romania, and the agreement with the Republic of Belarus on State borders, the first of the kind to be signed in the history of the newly independent States.

The signing by the Presidents of Ukraine and of Poland of the joint statement on reconciliation and unity was of exceptional significance for the improvement of the situation in Central and Eastern Europe. We view that document as exemplifying a balanced and unbiased approach to the evaluation of complex pages of history, and as a deliverance from the burden of the past for the sake of the development of mutually beneficial cooperation now and in the future.

The resolution of the problem of the division of the Black Sea fleet has contributed to enhanced security in the Black Sea region and throughout Europe.

Among the most recent of important events, I wish to note the signing at Madrid of the Charter on Special Partnership between Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The establishment of a special partnership with the alliance has tangibly strengthened confidence in Europe and is now one of the important elements in the establishment of a new system of European security.

It is generally acknowledged that the future of the European security architecture as an important element of global security should be based on principles of comprehensiveness, indivisibility and partnership, and, in the long run, on collective rather than unilateral action. It is in that context that Ukraine is developing active cooperation with European and transatlantic security structures.

An important place in Ukraine's foreign policy priorities belongs to developing mutually beneficial relations with the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Ukraine is also devoting special attention to the Movement of Non-aligned Countries, which is one of the influential factors in contemporary international relations. Our observer status in that movement testifies to the fact that Ukraine is today a non-bloc country.

All of this can be summarized in a single conclusion: thanks to Ukraine's persistent efforts, its borders are now peaceful and it is open to partnership with neighbouring countries. Our multifaceted foreign policy has promoted the image of Ukraine as a reliable and predictable partner.

We have been guided by, and still abide by, the well-known principle: think globally and act locally. I believe that this approach — based, incidentally, on fundamental provisions of the United Nations Charter — will lay the foundation for future relationships among all members of the world community.

The events on the European continent since the end of the Cold War have persuasively shown that threats to security on the continent will henceforth emanate not from confrontation between military-political blocs, but rather from regional and local conflicts. A good reminder of this is the series of tragic events of recent years in the Balkans, in the Transdniestr region, in the Caucasus and elsewhere. At the same time, discussions on the future of European security have so far focused mainly on the issues of NATO and European Union enlargement, the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and so forth. It is not my intention to minimize the importance of these issues, but we are certain that all-European stability will be unattainable without strengthening regional security and establishing mutually beneficial and good-neighbourly relations between Ukraine and other nations.

It is to that end that European countries — especially those of Central and Eastern Europe, among them Ukraine — should exert the best of their efforts. It was for this very reason that we proposed to hold in Ukraine the 1999 summit meeting of the Baltic and Black Sea States.

By the will of destiny, we are living at the threshold of a new millennium, which has coincided with a turning point in the development of mankind. The United Nations — a unique instrument for the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security — should be well prepared for the changes ahead and should be ready to respond to the challenges of today and of the twenty-first century.

It is difficult to overestimate the positive changes in the world in which the United Nations has played a key role. It is true that the Organization has not been able completely to cure all social evils. However, it is equally true that the United Nations has always sent a timely signal regarding the emergence of new hazards and has united the world community to address urgent global problems.

The substantive outcome of these joint efforts relates in particular to environmental protection in its global

dimension: prohibiting chemical and bacteriological weapons and reducing nuclear weapons, as well as formulating a new concept and practice of peacekeeping; ensuring human rights; and codifying international law on non-renewable resources.

At the same time, we must admit that the United Nations has not always been able adequately to respond to a number of the problems it has faced. This makes it necessary further to improve its structure and internal organization and to increase the effectiveness of its work.

Unfortunately, we must take note of the fact that no institution other than the United Nations so clearly confirms the validity of Parkinson's law, which states that the expansion of bureaucracy has no limits. For that reason, I believe that today no one has any doubts that changes in the United Nations are urgent and are objectively required. I hope that the current session will make a substantive contribution to this important cause and that we will have all due reason to refer to it as "the session of reforms".

The well-known seventeenth-century Ukrainian philosopher and educator Hryhoriy Skovoroda once said that

> "You do your best work and save yourself when you firmly embark upon the road of common sense".

This, in our view, is the path that the process of United Nations reform should also take. Ukraine is actively supporting measures aimed at bringing the structure and tasks of the Organization in line with new realities.

It is from this perspective that we are now considering a package of proposals by the Secretary-General aimed at a wide-scale reorganization of the United Nations structure and its programme activities. While these proposals may not fully coincide with the interests of some countries or regions, they have been elaborated on the basis of compromise and, in fact, constitute the first real attempt to stop marking time in the process of reforming the Organization. Therefore we have to be pragmatic and attempt to avoid drowning this issue in endless discussions and appeals, as has happened repeatedly in the past.

We should begin without delay concrete work on the proposals of the Secretary-General, without dividing the package into separate components. Furthermore, we must keep in mind that the implementation of these proposals, following their final approval and endorsement by the General Assembly, will be only the initial stage in the process of the radical transformation of the United Nations, which will have to embrace its most important components, primarily the Security Council and the budgetary and financial system.

In this context, equitable geographical representation in the Security Council and the increase of its membership take on special importance. It would not be a mistake to say that this problem is considered by the majority of Member States as a priority issue and that its resolution, to a great extent, will determine the results and the success of the reform of the Organization. In general, Ukraine shares this point of view. But we also believe that the overall process of the renewal and rebuilding both of the United Nations structure and of its activities should not be held hostage to the solving of one issue, albeit a very important one.

The negotiations that took place within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly were, in our opinion, useful and productive. The positions of many Member States have shifted, moving towards achieving compromise. We can realistically expect participants in the negotiations to reach the general accord that is necessary for the adoption of a decision, as required by the relevant resolution of the General Assembly. I should like to call on Member States to exert maximum efforts to reach a consensus decision. The most important thing now is to transcend nationally focused approaches by taking into account the common interests of the international community.

Concerning the enlargement of the Security Council, I believe that the solution to the problem should be based on the following general principles.

First, all the regional groups, including the Group of Eastern European States, should enlarge their representation in the Security Council; secondly, the enlargement should not negatively affect the efficiency of the work of the Security Council; and thirdly, the process of enlargement should not be given a strict time limit, although a decision on this issue should preferably be taken in the near future.

The elaboration and practical implementation of an overall concept of peacekeeping activities is an extremely pressing issue that can be settled only within the framework of the United Nations. Two years ago, at the

commemorative meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization, I proposed gradually to re-orient United Nations peacekeeping activities towards preventive diplomacy. The experience of Blue Helmets operations in hot spots around the globe in recent years has further convinced us of the need to strengthen the preventive component.

In this context, we consider the system of United Nations standby agreements to be promising. Ukraine, striving to make a real contribution to the strengthening of this mechanism, recently signed the relevant memorandum of understanding with the United Nations.

Improving the efficiency of peacekeeping operations is not an abstract notion for our country. Let us recall that the first Ukrainian peacekeeping unit was deployed five years ago to the United Nations peacekeeping force in the former Yugoslavia. Since then Ukraine has participated in more than 10 United Nations peacekeeping operations. In addition, our military contingent has taken part in the operations of the multinational stabilization force in Bosnia.

From this lofty rostrum, I reaffirm Ukraine's readiness to participate directly in a settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, to join the activities of the group of countries known as Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, and to dispatch its personnel to the United Nations peacekeeping mission in that country.

Ukraine will also continue its efforts to bring about a final settlement of the conflict in the Transdniestr, acting together with Russia and with the participation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as a guarantor of the special status of the Transdniestr as an integral part of the Republic of Moldova.

The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly held earlier this year, which was devoted to reviewing progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, was a major international event. I know that many countries have assessed its results rather critically since, in their opinion, the session did not fully meet expectations. But it did confirm the adherence of the overwhelming majority of countries to the principles of sustainable development declared in Rio, and it also provided the world community with a number of constructive proposals with regard to a further strengthening of global partnership in the field of environment protection.

We must all remember the equal right of present and future generations to a viable living environment. Our shared obligation to them is to join our efforts for the sake of the survival and development of human civilization. That was the essence of Ukraine's proposal concerning the elaboration in future of an international legal document that would serve as a reliable legal basis for safe and sustainable development worldwide.

For Ukraine, environmental problems are not just abstract theory. The Chernobyl nuclear-power plant accident has been a real national tragedy for my country. Every year up to 15 per cent of the State budget is spent on compensating for the losses it has caused and on ensuring social benefits for the people affected.

Ukraine made a political commitment to decommission the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by the end of the millennium and has made continuous efforts to fulfil it. We expect other countries to meet their commitments in this regard.

At the same time, the problem of Chernobyl cannot be limited to the decommissioning of the nuclear power plant. This accident unleashed a series of problems that are global in nature and could scarcely be overcome alone by even the most developed nations. Chernobyl today is not the exclusive problem of Ukraine. In paying tribute to the United Nations efforts aimed at eliminating the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, I wish to emphasize that an overall solution to this global problem is simply impossible without large-scale international assistance.

At present, the United Nations is going through a difficult but crucial moment of renewal. The same can be said about Ukraine, which is more than ever before conscious of its dependence on the world order and relies on the support of the international community. That is why the question of what form the world order will assume in the future — to which this session is expected to provide an answer — is of particular and, without exaggeration, fateful importance to us.

The future of the world order, of the United Nations and of every country, is our common future. Thus, while deciding today on the fate of the United Nations, we should be aware that we are also determining our own destiny.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Excellency, the President of Ukraine, for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sharif (Pakistan): May I begin with a verse from the Holy Koran:

(*spoke in Arabic*)

"To each is a goal
To which God turns him;
Then strive together
Towards all that is good.
Wheresoever ye are,
God will bring you
Together. For God
Hath power over all things." (*The Holy Koran, II:148*)

(*spoke in English*)

I convey to you, Sir, and to the nations assembled here the greetings of our people in this golden jubilee year of Pakistan's independence.

Soon after achieving its independence, Pakistan was admitted to the United Nations. The half-century of Pakistan's and the United Nations existence has been eventful. Through years of upheavals and dislocations, through turbulence and brief moments of tranquillity, we now stand at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium. The theme of world affairs has been transformed.

During these 50 years, Pakistan has demonstrated its commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations in word and deed. We have fulfilled our obligations to this Organization. We have adhered to its resolutions. We have contributed politically and materially to its collective endeavour to build peace and promote prosperity. We are especially proud of our contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide.

I wish to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his determination and vision in carrying out his responsibilities. I would like to assure him that Pakistan will, as always, support all initiatives for the realization of the objectives set out in the United Nations Charter.

We are fortunate to have a person of your stature and experience, Sir, to guide this session of the General Assembly. The items on its agenda are important and consequential, particularly the crucial issue of United Nations reform. I wish you every success.

Doctrines of confrontation and containment are no longer valid. The new idea of our times is that of global partnership between the North and the South, the East and the West. The United Nations must forge this global compact. The creed of our era is peace and development. This is what the United Nations must focus on as it strives to bring about organizational reform. We support the process of reform in the United Nations. In pursuing this objective, we must bear in mind our successes and failures of the past 50 years. The centrality and sanctity of the Charter must be preserved as we move towards reconfiguring the United Nations.

The United Nations today stands at the brink of bankruptcy. The reform cannot and must not be victim to the narrow strategic, political and administrative preferences of a chosen few as a means of regaining the Organization's solvency. True reform has to take into account the interests of all. The United Nations is a universal Organization of 185 States and their 6 billion people. The purpose of its creation was to serve the interests of all humankind. This should be the guiding principle for its reform.

There is undoubtedly need for reform. The map of the world has been redrawn. Many new States have emerged since 1945, when the United Nations was established. The reform that is envisaged must be designed to facilitate the objectives for which the United

Nations was created: to promote global peace, security, cooperation and prosperity.

More than mere lip service must be done to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, such as the sovereign equality of all its Members and equal rights for all nations, large or small. The emergence of five veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council was the consequence of an unfortunate afterthought. It was completely incompatible with the democratic ethos of the United Nations Charter. The result was the impotence and inaction of the United Nations during the cold war years. The legitimization and enlargement of the privileged club of veto powers would deal a crippling body blow to the ability of the United Nations to carry out its responsibilities.

The contours of a multipolar world are gradually emerging. In the event of a resumption of great-Power rivalries, the proliferation of the veto will once again freeze the Security Council into irrelevance.

It is ironical that the countries which practice democracy at home and advocate it abroad should want to create a new aristocracy of States. Any decision on Security Council reform that is not backed by the consensus of all the Member States of the United Nations will erode the credibility and undermine the legitimacy of the Council and of the United Nations.

The Charter of the United Nations rejects hegemony. International peace and security have to be built through cooperative efforts. This entails the resolution of disputes through negotiations, mediation and arbitration. It means removing the causes of war and conflict. It involves the promotion of global prosperity and development. It necessitates adherence to the resolutions of the United Nations, particularly those of the Security Council.

The enforcement of peace should be undertaken only in response to actual acts of aggression or breaches. It must be pursued collectively and fairly, not imposed arbitrarily by the strong over the weak. Nowhere does the Charter provide for pre-emptive penalties against States for arms proliferation or presumed threats to peace.

A central weakness of the United Nations is that some members are expected to pay their contributions to its budget fully, unconditionally and on time, while others delay payments. The principle of capacity-to-pay-is fair; it should not be unilaterally discarded. At the same time, alternate sources of funding have to be explored in order to make the United Nations immune to pressure, unhealthy influence and hostile onslaughts.

The intention of the Charter was to place the United Nations at the apex of the system of international organizations that were created at the end of the Second World War. The Charter rightly perceived political, security, economic, social, cultural and humanitarian issues to be interrelated. It therefore called for coordinated approaches and policies to address those issues. To achieve this, it is essential for the United Nations to become the central link for the entire family of international organizations, without exception. Only then will the world community be able to address successfully the host of diverse, complex and interrelated problems it confronts.

On its fiftieth anniversary, Pakistan — like the United Nations — has embarked upon the course of reform and renewal. In this endeavour, we are inspired by the eternal ideals of Islam in which justice, equity and human rights, especially those of women and minorities, are the central pillars. Islam draws no distinction between creeds. It accepts all religions. Thus, the Holy Koran declares:

(spoke in Arabic)

"Say ye: 'We believe
In God, and the revelation
Given to us, and to Abraham,
Ismā'īl, Isaac, Jacob,
And the Tribes, and that given
To Moses and Jesus, and that given
To (all) Prophets from their Lord:
We make no difference
Between one and another of them:
And we bow to God (in Islam).'" (The Holy Koran, II:136)

(spoke in English)

My Government is vigorously addressing the political, economic and social problems we inherited from the past. We have taken measures to consolidate parliamentary democracy through constitutional means; to restore financial equilibrium through austerity and structural adjustments while enhancing business incentives and economic liberalization; to combat corruption, drugs and terrorism — which is often sponsored from abroad — through effective law enforcement and speedy and fair justice.

These policies have yielded dividends. We look to the future with hope and optimism. Our economy is open and dynamic. Domestic and foreign investment is growing rapidly. Our people are imaginative, skilful and hard-working. We have demonstrated that we can master the most advanced technologies. We can now deter external aggression. With confidence in ourselves, we seek friendship and cooperation with all our neighbours on the basis of equality.

Pakistan strives for peace and stability in its region. We seek an early end to the conflict in Afghanistan; a just and fair settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations; an end to the wasteful arms race in South Asia; and the development of the immense economic and commercial potential of South and Central Asia.

We have the courage to strive for peace and the wisdom to know that it is essential for development. South Asia, with one-fifth of the world's population, remains mired in poverty and deprivation. I call upon India to join us in liberating our peoples from the dreadful grip of poverty. This can only be achieved by removing the causes of conflict and hostility.

The conflict that has ravaged Afghanistan for almost two decades must be brought to an end. No country in the world has suffered more than Pakistan as a consequence of the turmoil. We therefore have a vital interest in the restoration of durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. Towards this end we have been in contact with all Afghan groups in support of the efforts of the United Nations aimed at promoting an intra-Afghan peace process.

We favour no faction in Afghanistan. We have recognized the present authorities in Kabul, as we did the previous entities that controlled the capital. We have encouraged moderation and dialogue so that a stable, multi-ethnic Government can emerge. We request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take specific initiatives for the early restoration of peace and the preservation of the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

My Government has also taken initiatives to resume the stalled dialogue with India. We had agreed last June on a comprehensive agenda and a mechanism to deal with all issues, including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir, in a sustained manner. We have, unfortunately, not yet succeeded in setting up the agreed mechanism to launch substantive negotiations on all the issues on the agenda of our dialogue. We hope that India will reciprocate our sincerity of purpose in substantively addressing all the issues and carrying forward this process of dialogue to a positive outcome.

The resolutions of the Security Council define Kashmir as a disputed territory whose accession to either Pakistan or India is to be determined through a plebiscite supervised by the United Nations. Under the Simla Agreement of 1972, India agreed to a final settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute with Pakistan.

The existence of the Kashmir dispute cannot be denied. The right of self-determination is sacrosanct. It has repeatedly been affirmed by the United Nations. The people of Kashmir are justified in asking why this pledge by the international community has not been honoured as yet. The Security Council cannot be selective in the implementation of its resolutions.

The Kashmiri people have risen against Indian occupation. Their resolute struggle for the restitution of their fundamental rights belies the claim that Kashmir is an integral part of India.

I am sad to say that the repression of the people of Jammu and Kashmir continues unabated. More than 600,000 Indian troops in Kashmir continue to brutalize the people. Custodial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and summary executions are daily occurrences. Thousands of Kashmiri civilians have been killed, while 32,000 languish in detention centres. I learned just this morning of the shelling of Arin in Kashmir by the Indian forces yesterday, a mortar attack in which 11 persons were killed and 12 injured. Six children and three women were among the dead. This is an altogether familiar occurrence in occupied Kashmir.

If India is serious in its allegation that the conflict in Kashmir is being stoked by interference from Pakistan it should have no hesitation in allowing the United Nations observers present in Kashmir to verify this claim. We hope that the United Nations will increase the number of these observers and ask India to allow their stationing on its side of the line of control as well.

The international community has a responsibility to bring about a just settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The pledge of self-determination given to the people of Jammu and Kashmir has to be redeemed. On our part, we welcome the offers made by the Secretary-General, the United States and others to help in resolving the Kashmir dispute.

My Government will persevere in the dialogue with India for the sake of our people and the peoples of South Asia. We hope that India can be persuaded to take some steps to create a climate conducive to the success of the talks. These could include, first, a halt in its campaign of repression against the people of Kashmir; secondly, the withdrawal of at least those Indian troops which are engaged in internal repression in Kashmir; and, finally, the evolution of a mechanism to take into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people, as stipulated by the United Nations, for a final settlement.

It is imperative now to negotiate arrangements to strengthen peace and security between India and Pakistan. Since 1974 Pakistan has pursued its proposal for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. On the other hand, India has taken successive steps to escalate its nuclear and missile capabilities. What does India mean when it repeatedly asserts that its nuclear option is "open"? Does this imply that, like chemical weapons, India has already manufactured nuclear weapons? In the absence of any assurances to the contrary, Pakistan will have to assume the worst.

India's nuclear-capable Prithvi missile is being serially produced. These missiles specifically target Pakistan. They have been moved adjacent to our borders. This creates a hair-trigger security environment. The development and possible deployment of the medium-range Agni missile and India's planned acquisition of theatre missile-defence systems will further aggravate this tense security environment. It will evoke the natural response from Pakistan to safeguard and augment its security and deterrence capability. India must be persuaded to reverse its missile programme.

To preserve peace and stability in South Asia and beyond, we propose that Pakistan and India should reach agreement for mutual and equal restraint in the nuclear and ballistic fields. In this context, we are deeply concerned about India's acquisition of missiles and its plans for the acquisition of anti-missile systems. We also propose a similar arrangement for mutual and equitable restraint on conventional weapons which ensures equal security to both Pakistan and India.

We are prepared to conclude and strengthen confidence- building measures. As a first step, we could agree on a set of principles to guide future bilateral arms-control arrangements.

We believe that a just settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and progress on the issues of peace and security will usher in an era of amity and progress in South Asia. To facilitate the realization of this objective, I offer today, from this rostrum, to open negotiations on a treaty of non-aggression between Pakistan and India.

There are many areas in which we can cooperate for mutual benefit. Trade liberalization can take place on an equitable basis. Significant foreign investment can be drawn to the region.

In the expectation that the Pakistan-India dialogue will have made a heartening advance by next year, my Government intends to host a regional economic summit in 1998, which could help to open new vistas for economic progress and prosperity for our region.

All this and much more can be achieved if India joins us in pursuing our current dialogue to its successful culmination. We have demonstrated our sincerity of purpose. It is for India to reciprocate.

Located at the nexus of Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, Pakistan can contribute to and gain from the economic growth and interaction between these dynamic regions. The United Nations and its family of organizations have a crucial role to play in generating prosperity and restoring peace with justice to these vital regions of the world.

Today, I wish to renew Pakistan's commitment to the United Nations, to its purposes and principles and to its vision of a world where genuine peace reigns and prosperity is universal. The vision of the founding fathers of the United Nations must continue to serve as a beacon guiding us across the uncharted waters of the coming millennium. The Charter of the United Nations and its timeless principles provide us the anchor to weather turmoil and turbulence. Let us renew our determination to defend and preserve this anchor of hope and faith. Let not political expediencies infringe or erode the fundamentals of international cooperation enshrined in the Charter.

We in Pakistan, who had dared to dream of freedom 50 years ago, are resolved to defend freedom — freedom from war, oppression, injustice, poverty and deprivation. Let us all move together towards realizing the vision of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, His Excellency Mr. Bjørn Tore Godal.

Mr. Godal (Norway): First, I join other speakers in congratulating my Ukrainian colleague upon his election to his high office.

Last week in Oslo, almost 100 countries agreed to a Convention text for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. Who would have imagined, only a year ago, such a remarkable achievement in such a short time? Thanks to the tireless efforts and model cooperation of Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society, we have reached this milestone event. I would like to extend a special tribute to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the International Committee of the Red Cross. They have been a driving force in our efforts to get rid of the scourge that landmines represent in the lives of men, women and children in conflict areas around the world.

At the beginning of December we will meet in Ottawa for the signing of the Convention. I appeal to all countries engaged in this process to ratify the Convention. To those who have not yet joined us, I say: "Please do so as soon as possible". Landmines cannot be allowed to terrorize, maim or kill more innocent civilians. The United Nations and its Members have an important role to play and responsibility for bringing success to the Ottawa process. I appreciate the support of the Secretary-General and welcome the fact that he will be the depositary of the treaty. We all have a strong moral obligation to increase our efforts to reduce the suffering and prevent new casualties caused by landmines. Norway intends to provide $100 million over a five-year period for mine clearance and assistance to victims.

The spread of landmines, small arms and weapons of mass destruction is unfortunately only one of the many interlinked global challenges illustrating that the world now, more than ever, needs the United Nations as a well-functioning global Organization. At the threshold of the third millennium, it is unacceptable that poverty and pollution still dominate the daily lives of billions of people all over the world; it is unacceptable that hostilities and hatred still create deadly new conflicts and humanitarian disasters, between and within States on all continents; and it is unacceptable that basic human and individual rights are still widely violated through injustice by Governments and the negligence of the international community.

Mr. Young (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Only the United Nations can tackle these universal and interdependent problems in a comprehensive and integrated manner. But the world has surely undergone radical changes since 1945, and so has the nature of the tasks confronting us. Hence, the United Nations also needs to change in order to do better what the Member States want it to do. I was therefore very pleased by the letter that Mr. Kofi Annan sent to all of our Governments last month. In clear and concise terms, the Secretary-General set out the elements of what is without doubt the most comprehensive reform package in the history of the United Nations.

Let me state clearly that Norway warmly welcomes and fully supports the Secretary-General's programme for reform and renewal of the United Nations. Together with the other Nordic countries, we have given our strong political backing to his reform proposals. We will work actively with other Member States to ensure that the General Assembly endorses the reform package this autumn. We want the reform plans to be implemented as soon as possible. Norway urgently wants a stronger and more efficient United Nations. Without such reform, we will have an Organization less able to promote development, peace and progress.

Norway is, as many know, one of the main contributors to the United Nations system. We are one of the group of countries that fulfil the aim of allocating more than 0.7 per cent of our gross national product to development. One out of every 100 Norwegians has participated in peacekeeping operations around the world. In terms of money, resources and personnel, our voluntary assistance to humanitarian relief activities, is, I am proud to say, second to none. But we want to make sure that our contribution is put to good use. We want to see it utilized by the United Nations to improve the lives of people where the needs are the greatest. That is why we support the Secretary-General's reform proposals.

First of all, the reforms will ensure that more resources are allocated more efficiently for development.

The Secretary-General's excellent proposal to use administrative savings for a "development dividend" is but one element in the process. We encourage him to continue further on the course that he has taken. United Nations activities targeting sustainable development, poverty, population, education, the promotion of the role of women in development and the implementation of the results of the Beijing Conference must be strengthened and integrated at the headquarters and field levels. Health should be among the main priorities. Increased international efforts are needed to assist developing countries in improving their national health policies and to combat emerging and re-emerging diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. Member States must follow up by fulfilling their obligations to increase their transfers of aid to the developing countries and peoples that need it the most. Hopefully, this will also have the effect of creating the confidence needed to bring us forward in the Rio process, towards renewed environmental commitments which can pave the way for a successful meeting in Kyoto later this year.

Secondly, the reforms will strengthen the ability of the United Nations to manage conflicts. Too often, the United Nations has shown a lack of capacity to act rapidly in the face of emerging crises. Therefore, we believe it is high time to establish a rapid-deployment mission headquarters for peacekeeping and other operations. Norway has offered to provide funding for personnel for this headquarters. Furthermore, we encourage other Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund for Preventive Action, which was established this year. We are pleased to note that the Fund has already facilitated the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in Central Africa. We want to cooperate closely on conflict resolution with our friends and partners in Africa, including through our training programmes for peacekeeping tasks in that region.

Thirdly, the reforms will extend the capacity of the United Nations in the human rights field. Norway welcomes the proposals to strengthen the human rights secretariat and the excellent choice of Mary Robinson as High Commissioner for Human Rights. We pledge to work closely with her to ensure that the international community increases its focus on human rights violations. Human rights concerns must become an integral part of all core areas of the Organization's work, including at Headquarters in New York.

We must follow up reform of the Security Council. Our position is, I believe, well known: the Council must be made more representative and should better reflect changes in political and economic realities. We want new permanent seats for Germany and Japan and for the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. At the same time, a limited number of new non-permanent seats should be added.

We need financial reform and changes to the scale of assessments. Some countries have experienced high and sustained economic growth, but still resist reforms which would better reflect their increased capacity to pay. Other countries feel that they are paying too much. We agree that the time has come to show flexibility in the discussions on lowering the ceiling on the scale of assessments to the United Nations budgets, as part of an overall solution. It cannot be justified that some countries unilaterally pay less than their legally binding share, or nothing at all. Non-payment is unacceptable. How can those of us who always make a point of paying in full and on time, without conditions, expect our citizens and taxpayers to continue financing free riders?

We need better integration and coordination within the United Nations system and between the United Nations, regional organizations, Governments, civil society and non-governmental actors. For Norway, this is not least important in the area of humanitarian assistance. We welcome the proposal to enhance the capacity of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to deal more effectively with complex emergencies.

In Bosnia we are engaged in peace-building under very difficult conditions. Men and women are serving a wide range of different organizations: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nations civilian police, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and humanitarian non-governmental organizations. Without the excellent coordination and cooperation that has evolved between the High Representative, the United Nations Special Representative, the Stabilization Force Commander, the OSCE Head of Mission and others, the peace-implementation process would have been in dire straits indeed.

Nationalist leaders in Bosnia are still inciting hatred. Refugees are being denied their right to return to their homes. Our personnel are being threatened. War criminals are still at large. But despite the failure of local leaders to fulfil their obligations, the recently held elections show that the international community has given this country hope for the future. We will stay the course and remain engaged in Bosnia until peace is consolidated. We will insist that wanted war criminals be brought to justice. The

convening of a United Nations conference to establish a permanent international criminal court in 1998 must be given priority.

Norway remains committed to the Middle East peace process. While we will continue to work actively with other donor countries to ensure the availability of funding, we are extremely concerned by the current deadlock. The parties must realize that there is no alternative to the peace process and to the fulfilment of the spirit and the letter of the Oslo accords. Further credible efforts to combat terrorism must be undertaken. The current settlements policy is not conducive to the peace process. We must redouble our efforts to bring the parties back into dialogue about the remaining issues.

We must not forget the success stories of United Nations conflict resolution. Just since last year, for example, the decades-long civil war in Guatemala has ended peacefully. We have had the pleasure of working with the United Nations and others, like the Group of Friends for Guatemala, in seeing through the ceasefire agreement signed in Oslo and the other peace accords. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca for their courage and determination to see the peace process succeed.

Finally, our experience in Guatemala and other conflict areas corroborates the importance that the Secretary-General attaches to the close interaction between the civil society, Governments and the United Nations. We must make use of the dedication, resources and commitment to peace and progress that exist among citizens, in non-governmental organizations and in the private sector. Through the active involvement and support of civil society, we can build a stronger and more effective world Organization for the next century.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Alfred Nzo.

Mr. Nzo (South Africa): South Africa welcomes your election, Sir, as the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We congratulate you having experienced at first hand your skills and role as Vice-Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid. We also express our appreciation to Ambassador Razali Ismail for his tireless work as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

May I also congratulate His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan on his election as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. The zeal that the Secretary-General has displayed in addressing, through his reform proposals, the difficulties confronting this Organization is impressive. The Secretary-General's reform programme is one that in many respects complements the intergovernmental process regarding the revitalization of the Organization.

The General Assembly is well aware of the need to reform the United Nations. The process of reform should produce a revitalized Organization capable of addressing humanity's vital issues of peace and security. Central to the process of modernization of the United Nations is the restructuring of the Security Council to redress existing imbalances and transform it into a transparent organ accountable to the broader membership of the Organization.

South Africa fully supports the Non-Aligned Movement's position that there should be no partial or selective expansion in the membership of the Security Council to the detriment of developing countries.

The reaffirmation at the Organization of African Unity's Harare Summit of Africa's claim to two permanent and five non-permanent seats, with the same powers and prerogatives enjoyed by the current permanent members in an expanded Security Council, is consistent with the Charter principle of equitable geographical representation. If the Security Council is to fulfil the role of custodian of international peace and security envisaged for it in the Charter, it must be perceived to be fully legitimate by States and peoples.

South Africa is therefore of the view that a limited expansion of only five or six new Security Council seats will not fulfil the crucial requirement of transforming the Security Council into a representative organ.

Central to the Security Council reform process is the question of the veto, which has been a focal point in our deliberations for the last three and a half years. Indeed, the democratization of the Council hinges on the veto being either eliminated or extended to the new permanent members. Accordingly, the issue of the status of the veto must of necessity form an integral part of a comprehensive reform package. Permanent membership without the veto represents merely a symbolic gesture to new permanent members which would serve to perpetuate

an unjust and discriminatory practice and accord them an inferior status.

I wish to recall that last year in the General Assembly, I registered South Africa's disappointment with the slow pace of the debate relating to the reform of the Security Council. The time has come for us all to display the necessary political will and determination in order to reach agreement on a comprehensive set of measures which will lead to the creation of a Security Council which is transparent, democratic, accountable and thus credible and legitimate.

The fifty-first session of the General Assembly also witnessed the conclusion of the work of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. Its notable recommendations regarding the strengthening of the role and functions of the General Assembly attest to the importance which we as Member States attach to this body as the supreme political organ of the Organization.

It is, however, disappointing that on the issue relating to the election of a Secretary-General, the Working Group was unable to reach consensus on the recommendation to the permanent members of the Security Council to refrain from using the veto to block the outcome of the election.

As a result of Africa's painful past experiences under colonial domination, as well as the abhorrent system of apartheid, my Government is committed to the final eradication of colonialism and fully supports the effective implementation of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. We believe, therefore, that the Committee of 24 should continue its work in order to determine the interests of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories regarding their future political status. We call on the administering Powers to lend their full cooperation to the Committee.

South Africa is concerned that intra-State conflicts in Africa continue to pose a threat to the continent's stability. These conflicts lead to loss of life and economic hardships and are a major stumbling block on the road towards peace and development. It is a matter of concern that conflicts in Africa persist despite the commendable efforts of the Organization of African Unity and of African leaders in conflict resolution.

We therefore urge parties to the conflict in the Republic of the Congo to observe the ceasefire agreement and to make all efforts to ensure that the interim measures for the holding of national elections in 1998 are instituted. Similarly, we condemn the coup in Sierra Leone and implore Member States of the United Nations to support Africa's efforts to restore constitutional order by refraining from recognizing or giving support in any form to the military Government.

South Africa is committed to the promotion of peace in Angola, which we believe will contribute to the consolidation and extension of stability to the whole of our region of southern Africa. We are therefore concerned about the failure of UNITA to fulfil its obligations under the Lusaka Protocol. In this regard, my Government welcomes the decision of the Security Council to impose the punitive measures envisaged in its resolution 1127 (1997), as a means of ensuring UNITA's compliance.

South Africa has followed the unfolding developments in the Middle East with cautious optimism. South Africa, and indeed the international community, welcomed the signing of the Oslo accord by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli Government and applauded it as representing a positive step towards the full realization of the long-awaited comprehensive and just settlement in the region. But the decision of the Government of Israel to construct new Jewish settlements in Jebel Abu Ghneim has given rise to tensions and has generated a crisis situation which has reignited conflict in the region. We all know that this decision is a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and of the relevant resolutions of this body. It is no doubt an attempt to change the legal status of Jerusalem and to pre-empt the final status negotiations.

The inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is a prerequisite for achieving a durable and comprehensive peace. For peace and stability to prevail, the region requires the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967.

South Africa welcomes the Secretary-General's latest initiatives currently under way to seek a lasting solution to the question of Cyprus. We urge all parties to make concerted efforts in working with the Secretary-General and his good offices towards an overall comprehensive settlement to this question, which has been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than 30 years.

South Africa attaches great importance to preventive diplomacy as a means of forestalling the possibility of conflict. We commend the report of the Special

Committee on Peacekeeping Operations because it provides us with measures aimed at strengthening the role of the United Nations in peacekeeping. We also welcome the Committee's 1997 report on peacekeeping operations and urge the Committee to address the question of the rapidly deployable mission headquarters and the further development of United Nations standby arrangements.

South Africa believes that progress on disarmament issues will create a world free of war. The end of the cold war heralded a period of progress in disarmament and non-proliferation, as was evidenced by the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. However, the re-emergence of maximalist positions in the disarmament debate retards global disarmament, as demonstrated by the disappointing progress made at the Conference on Disarmament this year. Despite the consensual adoption of a mandate for the negotiation of a fissile-material cut-off treaty, one of the essential elements for complete nuclear disarmament, little progress has been made. Nevertheless, South Africa is encouraged by the large number of States which have committed themselves to the complete eradication of weapons of mass destruction by joining various non-proliferation and disarmament treaties during the past year. Universal adherence to important disarmament treaties will pave the way towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

Humanity is faced with the daily threat of harm from the use of conventional weapons. High priority should be placed on strategies and policies intended to prevent the proliferation of conventional weapons and to reduce their flow to conflict areas. The conclusions reached by the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms lay the foundation for future action by the international community.

On 18 September 1997, the Oslo Diplomatic Conference adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The Convention is a clear and total ban on anti-personnel mines and establishes a compelling new international norm against this scourge which has for so long afflicted humanity, especially innocent civilians, mostly women and children. South Africa looks forward to the early entry into force of the Convention and appeals to all States to heed the call of the international community against these inhumane weapons.

South Africa has often expressed grave concern at the involvement of its nationals in mercenary activities, because these activities inhibit the achievement of peaceful solutions to internal conflicts and destabilize regions. Consequently, we have drafted legislation to regulate the rendering of military assistance by private individuals and companies to foreign Governments and agencies.

The South African Government puts a high premium on the promotion and protection of human rights as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the thirtieth of the International Year for Human Rights, we reaffirm our commitment to the preeminent values of basic human dignity, values for which we have fought and for which we must continue to fight. Our peoples deserve no less. In this context, my delegation supports the recommendation to convene a world conference on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

My Government remains committed to addressing gender inequities. The worst manifestations of these unequal gender relations are the acts of violence committed against women and girls. My Government has pledged itself to preventing and combating this violence by, among other initiatives, aligning its legislation, policies and strategies with international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

South Africa believes in the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the promotion of international cooperation for economic and social development. To this end, we welcome those measures in the Secretary-General's proposed reform package which seek to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations and to revitalize its role in the context of development.

The adoption of the Agenda for Development by the General Assembly was a milestone in our collective search for a meaningful global partnership for development. That the membership could reach agreement on so complex a matter is testimony to the seriousness with which States view the issue, and to the dynamics of consensus-building in fostering a global partnership. Member States should act to implement the Agenda for Development in a coordinated manner, by creating dynamic structures susceptible of successful delivery.

South Africa remains committed to an action-orientated Agenda for Development which gives priority to international cooperation for development. Partnerships

for development, as envisaged also in the Midrand Ministerial Declaration and Partnership for Growth and Development, should be established to ensure effective delivery of assistance to the developing world.

The problems of abject poverty and social deprivation continue to afflict and haunt many countries, particularly in the developing world. In order to address this scourge, which affects least-developed countries in particular, effective and consistent measures need to be undertaken within the context of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

The issue of external indebtedness continues to frustrate the ability of the least-developed countries to promote economic and social development. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to address and find a solution to this problem as a matter of urgency.

One year after the conclusion of the mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, we need to take stock and review progress to see if the requisite resource mobilization levels are anywhere near being met and whether the central development goals are in place. As with the mid-term review of the New Agenda, this would enable the international community to take urgent and practical action on behalf of the African continent to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment.

We in southern Africa, as a region whose potential for development was hamstrung by the repressive policies of apartheid, cannot but seek the promotion of our people through cooperation. It follows therefore that we should be committed to the transformation of our Southern African Development Community into an institution which provides a framework for the promotion of the imperatives of reconstruction and development. This would enhance the degree to which, individually and collectively, the region offers a basis to ensure a better life for all our peoples.

The global partnership for sustainable development will be enhanced through the transfer of essential and environmentally sound technologies to developing States on preferential and concessional terms. The financial resources and mechanisms necessary for the implementation of Agenda 21 are still inadequate. Developed countries should honour their commitment to raise official development assistance flows to the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product. Those few countries which have achieved this objective are commended.

We encourage the promotion and sustainable management of the global environment to ensure a higher quality of life for all. The objective of sustainable development should be the integration of environmental, economic and social policies in order to meet basic human needs and to manage the environment on a sustainable basis.

The disappointing lack of consensus at the special session of the General Assembly on the environment held in June 1997 leaves considerable follow-up action to be undertaken in order to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21. In this respect, the role and importance of the United Nations Environment Programme as one of the leading United Nations bodies in the field of the environment should be strengthened.

We commend the decision to convene a special session on drugs to deal effectively with the illicit production, sale, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The special session will offer Member States an opportunity to join their efforts to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

South Africa strongly favours the early establishment of a permanent, independent and effective international criminal court. An opportunity now exists to establish the court before the turn of the century. We must therefore redouble our efforts during the forthcoming sessions of the Preparatory Committee to ensure that the diplomatic conference in Rome can complete its work successfully.

It is imperative that all Member States continue fully to support the international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. To this end, my Government, in collaboration with the Parliamentarians for Global Action, recently hosted an international workshop on securing State cooperation and compliance with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Its purpose was to review cooperation with the Rwanda Tribunal and encourage the enactment of domestic legislation by Member States, thus ensuring that those accused of acts of genocide are swiftly brought to trial.

My Government welcomes efforts to elaborate a draft convention to define terrorism. It is our belief that acts of terrorism must be clearly distinguished from national liberation struggles in pursuit of the right to self-determination by peoples subjected to foreign or colonial domination.

I should like to take this opportunity to announce to the Assembly that on 20 August 1997, the South African Cabinet approved ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. South Africa, a country with considerable maritime interests, will, for its part, continue to play a meaningful and constructive role in the governance of the world's oceans.

The continuing financial crisis of the Organization is of great concern to my delegation. We fully support the Secretary-General's commitment to ending the long and persistent near bankruptcy of the Organization. It behoves Member States to discharge their Charter obligation by paying their contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

The lofty ideals that brought us together should continue to serve as an inspiration for us to strengthen the authority and capacity of the United Nations as we move into the next millennium.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Josef Zieleniec.

Mr. Zieleniec (Czech Republic): At the outset, may I congratulate Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly and wish him much success in this important and responsible function. I should also like to use this opportunity to thank his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who, with his typical energetic approach, contributed greatly to the success of the fifty-first session.

The recently concluded fifty-first session of the General Assembly can certainly be described without exaggeration as one of the key periods in the history of the United Nations. The important reform proposals submitted during its course will, if carried out, result in the most fundamental change in the structure and activities of the United Nations since its foundation. We strongly believe that the Organization will emerge from the reform process reinforced and that this process will increase the importance of the United Nations as a global forum that focuses on the serious problems facing our world today, open to all who wish and are willing to take part.

We greatly appreciate the vigour and vision with which the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has committed himself to the reform efforts. We support the measures he has already taken to make the work of the United Nations Secretariat more effective as well as the package of recommendations he submitted to the General Assembly last July. Whether or not these concrete and effective reform steps are really put into effect now depends on the political will of the Member States. The Czech Republic will make every effort to be most cooperative in this respect.

We are glad that the reform efforts of the Secretary-General have met with a favourable response on the part of the Member States. His proposals have been supported also by the 16 Heads of State and Government associated in the Carlsson Group, of which Czech President Václav Havel is also a member. As this Group stated in its declaration of 10 August 1997 on the Secretary-General's reform proposals, the United Nations has a chance to take a step forward, and this chance should not be missed.

As for restructuring the Security Council, the Czech Republic prefers the expansion of both Council-member categories while preserving the Council's effectiveness and flexibility. We continue to support an increase in the number of permanent members to include Germany, Japan and three other countries representing Africa, Asia and Latin America. My country also advocates expansion of the category of non-permanent seats, including one seat for the Group of Eastern European States.

The reform of the Security Council should also result in improving and simplifying the Council's working methods. My country has actively participated in discussions of this question and has submitted a proposal for a broader interpretation of Article 31 of the United Nations Charter. We are pleased that our proposal has been backed by a number of Member States and believe it will become part of the working methods of the reformed Security Council.

It is quite unthinkable to restructure the United Nations without changing its present system of financing. In order to make cost-sharing more equitable it is necessary to change the existing scale of assessments. The new system of contributions to the regular budget and to peacekeeping operations should reflect the real economic capacity of individual Member States. All Member States, without exception, should also duly comply with their financial obligations.

For my country, this year is a year of important events. The invitation extended at the Madrid Summit to three Central European countries, including the Czech Republic, to open talks on accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is a key and historic

decision which we regard not as a first and last step, but, rather, as the beginning of the process of NATO enlargement. The Czech Republic is convinced that the alliance will in the future invite some other democratic countries. The signing of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation constitutes an important step towards the strengthening of European security.

The Czech Republic has noted with satisfaction that the effort of the European Union to further enhance the integration process achieved concrete results at the Intergovernmental Conference in Amsterdam. We welcomed the European Commission's positive assessment of the Czech Republic as a candidate for European Union membership. We believe that negotiations with the Czech Republic and other candidates for membership can start in the early months of 1998.

One of the basic prerequisites for a country's stability is harmonious relations with its neighbours. This is why we attach great importance to the Czech-German declaration on mutual relations and their future development, signed in Prague in January of this year. By signing this document the two sides confirmed their political will to further intensify all-round bilateral cooperation as an expression of their determination to work jointly on shaping a peaceful future in Europe. In fact, this joint determination and political will is already being transformed into concrete steps in different areas.

We are very sensitive to the political problems of our present world, and, within our capacities, participate in their solution. One of the most complicated issues is undoubtedly the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We support the peace process based on the Dayton Peace Accords and on the London Programme of Action, and consider them the best possible solution to the protracted conflict. It is beyond dispute that one key prerequisite for the success of the peace process is the just punishment of all war crimes committed during the conflict.

We also focus our attention on the situation in the Middle East, the region currently being visited by President Havel. The peace process is now in a difficult phase, but its role is irreplaceable. We hope, however, that bilateral talks between the State of Israel and its neighbours will lead to greater stability in the region and eventually result in just and lasting peace for all.

The Czech Republic follows with much concern the security and humanitarian situation in certain African countries, in particular in the Great Lakes region, but also in Somalia and Sierra Leone. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity aimed at putting an end to unrest, wars and suffering in Africa. Positive changes taking place in Liberia, for example, fill us with optimism. We believe that the work done by our own military observers in the operations of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia has also contributed to this progress.

My country wishes to continue to participate in building a global security architecture. Within the United Nations we want to work actively, mainly in the fields of peacekeeping operations, arms control and disarmament. Our military observers, doctors and other medical personnel participate in a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations. A Czech Army battalion has been operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina under NATO command within the multinational Stabilization Force, on the basis of the Security Council mandate. It has been performing its tasks well, and we are pleased that its activities are being viewed positively.

The inclusion of the Czech Republic at the beginning of this year in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations is both a sign of appreciation of our activities in this field and a manifestation of our commitment to participate further in peacekeeping operations and to improve the level of our participation.

The Czech Republic has been actively participating in the field of arms control and disarmament. As a non-nuclear-weapon State, we are naturally interested in attaining universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its strict observance, which, we expect, will lead to the further reduction of nuclear proliferation and will advance the long-term objective of nuclear disarmament. We attach great importance to the sessions of the preparatory committees, and expect that their positive suggestions could set the tone of the Review Conference to be held in the year 2000 towards reinforcing the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Czech Republic has from the very beginning voiced support for the idea of strengthening the international safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency within the so-called 93 +2 Programme. It was within these efforts that the Czech Republic only a few days ago officially informed the

International Atomic Energy Agency's secretariat of its interest in concluding a supplementary protocol to the safeguards agreement between the Czech Republic and the Agency, as required by the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The majority of Member States of the United Nations last year signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and I am pleased to state that my country was one of the first to ratify it.

We welcome the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We expect it to effectively control and carry out the verification process, in which we are prepared to participate fully.

We are convinced that the Biological Weapons Convention needs more effective control mechanisms. To this end, Czech experts are actively participating in talks on finalizing the verification protocol, which will considerably strengthen this Convention.

In the field of conventional weapons, the Czech Republic supports all measures contributing to greater transparency, and has been systematically fulfilling all its obligations concerning notification to the respective registers. At this year's Brussels Conference on anti-personnel land mines, the Czech Republic joined the so-called Ottawa process, and it is prepared to sign in Ottawa early in December a convention on the complete ban of such weapons.

It has been an honour for my country to chair two important United Nations bodies this year. The Economic and Social Council plays a very important role in promoting international cooperation in the economic and social fields. Its reform is therefore very important. The Czech Republic has always stressed the need for better coordination, effectiveness and simplification of the Council's structure and activities. We also believe that when chairing the Council we have helped shape its new image. We noted promising signs of this new image already during its substantive session in July. One example was the high-level segment with participation of ministers and senior government officials, which proved the growing interest of the Member States in discussions on specific subjects. An informal political dialogue with representatives of United Nations funds and agencies also proved the Council's ability to serve as a platform for useful and fruitful exchanges of views. The reform and strengthening of the Economic and Social Council should continue. In this respect, we welcome all steps taken to implement resolution 50/227, and above all to further simplify the structure of the Council's subsidiary bodies.

In its priorities, the Czech Republic pays great attention to the protection of human rights as one of the necessary conditions for free development of human society and democracy. We had the honour to chair the Commission on Human Rights in the first year of our membership in this important body. On the basis of this experience, the Czech Republic has been urging the elimination of factors negatively influencing the work of the Commission, and has been seeking new approaches and methods of dealing with individual cases of flagrant violation of human rights.

Next year the international community will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We hope that this event will be an occasion not merely for ceremonial assemblies and declarations, but for presenting concrete results of work in the field of human rights.

My country supports all efforts aimed at early establishment of an International Criminal Court, which would create a new system for punishing the most serious crimes of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. The need for such an institution is acute, and the Czech Republic fully supports the convocation of a diplomatic conference in 1998 to adopt and open to signature the convention on the establishment of the court.

One of the burning scourges of our world today is the growth of international organized crime and the related problem of drug abuse. This global problem can be solved effectively only through close international cooperation. We believe that the special session of the General Assembly in 1998 will stimulate the strengthening of this cooperation.

Another threat hanging over the world is international terrorism. This is a threat which can be neutralized only by the tough and uncompromising attitude of the international community and by effective international cooperation. Every country sincerely interested in security throughout the world must strictly observe and comply with commitments arising from relevant international instruments. The Czech Republic supports every effort aimed at the elaboration of an international convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings. In this respect, my country has also actively participated in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee set up

to deal with this problem and believes that the current session of experts will make further progress in the finalization of the draft convention so that it may be adopted and opened to signature as soon as possible.

One of the most dynamically developing spheres of international and global cooperation is that of environment and sustainable development. The United Nations has been traditionally working hard in this field. The key, irreplaceable role in this field is played by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. It seems that UNEP is already on the way out of crisis, although not all the problems are solved by any means. The recent establishment of the high-level committee is undoubtedly a step towards improvement of the governing structure of UNEP and towards stabilization of its programme and budget. In a short time we expect the strengthened UNEP to start a new endeavour to fulfil its mandate.

The process of follow-up activities of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was given a new and strong impulse at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. The results of this special session were not unambiguously positive. On the one hand, we welcome the wide support for the promotion of sustainable development and for efforts of Governments and international organizations, further strengthened by complementary activities of non-governmental organizations, national Governments, entrepreneurial circles and other interest groups. On the other hand, however, the session proved that not all of them are prepared to take resolute steps towards achieving sustainable development.

The tasks facing the United Nations in the next period are numerous and difficult. However, they have been clearly outlined and can be fulfilled. It also depends on us, Member States, whether and how we will cope with them. It is the results of our joint efforts that will decide not only the fate of the world Organization but also of the world itself on the threshold of the next millennium.

The Acting President: I should like to appeal to the participants in the general debate to respect as much as possible the estimated speaking time they have provided to the Secretariat. This would greatly facilitate the work of the General Assembly.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, His Excellency Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili.

Mr. Menagarishvili (Georgia) (*interpretation from Russian*): I should like to begin by congratulating the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, on his election as President of General Assembly at its fifty-second session. This is a compelling acknowledgment of the high international esteem in which Ukraine is held and of Mr. Udovenko's personal qualities and extensive experience. At the same time, I should like to express gratitude to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who made a significant contribution to the successful guidance of that session.

It is particularly important for us to be making this statement today from this lofty rostrum. Five years have passed since Georgia became a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. I believe that the time has come to assess the development of Georgian statehood, as well as the results of our full-fledged participation in and active cooperation with the United Nations.

In this five-year period our country has travelled from civil war, chaos, economic collapse and rampant crimes to ever increasing stability, the establishment of democratic institutions and tangible economic progress. The fact that we have been able to emerge with dignity from the most critical phase in our independent development is, to a large extent, to the credit of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, which provided Georgia not only with moral support but with specific and timely financial and technical assistance. We shall always remember that with particular gratitude.

We understand what a responsible task the United Nations has as it

> "strives to articulate an inclusive vision: community among nations, common humanity among peoples, the singularity of our only one Earth." *(A/51/950, para. 1)*

The criterion for the formation of such a vision is the destiny of each people and every State, including Georgia, whose recent history fully and clearly reflects all the virtues and flaws of the present world order. Georgia can thus serve as a model with regard to the need to implement long-awaited changes and radical reforms within the United Nations system. It is precisely on this subject that I wish to share my views.

The global post-confrontational development following the end of cold war has not, unfortunately, been

as simple as had been expected. We have stressed on numerous occasions, including from this rostrum, that the global confrontation between two systems has given way to equally dangerous local and intra-State conflicts that carry within them the potential for enormous destruction, thereby posing the same global challenge to international security. One of the manifestations of this dangerous trend is the aggressive separatism that has plagued my country and several other newly independent States. We have also pointed out that the United Nations and other international organizations should act in a manner that takes account of these changes. Unfortunately, our recent experience shows that, as a result of somewhat entrenched attitudes, these realities are frequently misunderstood.

The main obstacle to the strengthening and development of our statehood and to the full implementation of economic reforms continues to be the lack of a settlement of the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. The situation in Abkhazia is particularly worrying. About 300,000 refugees and displaced persons from Abkhazia are still unable to return to their homes. These people, whom fate has not treated kindly, are already beginning to lose hope for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. We are obliged to note that, regrettably, the conflict in Abkhazia has become a kind of touchstone exposing the inadequacy of United Nations efforts. We therefore continue to insist on the need to find a new approach that can give a new impetus to the dialogue. We welcome the vigorous steps being taken to strengthen the role of the United Nations in settling the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.

We have embraced with hope and optimism the new initiatives put forward by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. We would like to stress in particular that we attach importance to the resumption of the Geneva negotiations between the parties to the conflict, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the Russian Federation as facilitator, the group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We are confident that the Geneva process will not only promote a settlement of the conflict, but will also reveal the transformational role that the United Nations can play under the new conditions. Here I must express deep gratitude to the President of Ukraine, His Excellency Mr. Leonid Kuchma, who, from this lofty rostrum expressed support for the efforts of the United Nations in Abkhazia and reaffirmed Ukraine's readiness to participate directly.

The establishment of a United Nations standby force would be very useful in developing the potential for United Nations peacekeeping operations to prevent the escalation of conflicts in a timely manner. Such forces would be on constant standby. We believe that such a system must include a technically well-equipped and appropriately staffed headquarters. It would be responsible for the evaluation and assessment of emerging conflict situations. On the basis of such assessments United Nations rapid-reaction forces, which have yet to be established, could be quickly sent to zones of conflict. We are confident that, had such forces existed five years ago, the tragic development of the conflict in Abkhazia could have been prevented. As the vicissitudes of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, have shown, there is still a need for clearly coordinated joint actions between the United Nations and regional and international organizations for the settlement of conflicts. The absence of such a practice considerably reduces the effectiveness of the peacekeeping efforts of our community.

Georgia's experience provides a positive example of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. This cooperation includes the joint United Nations-OSCE office for monitoring human rights in Abkhazia and the programme for the economic rehabilitation of the Tskhinvali region, proposed and implemented by the United Nations Development Program. I also believe that we should seriously consider the proposal of the acting Chairman of the OSCE, by which the State chairing that Organization would automatically join the group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, thereby promoting and increasing cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE. We believe that there is a need to welcome the process of cooperation between the United Nations and regional international organizations, which has already begun.

We should also reconsider the important concept of post-conflict peace-building. We are sometimes prisoners of stereotyped notions of a phased approach to settling conflicts, and as a result we sometimes fail to notice how thin the line is between establishing peace and peacekeeping itself. In the process of conflict settlement it is more effective to use elements of post-conflict peace-building, including them in the strategy of peacekeeping operations. Elements of post-conflict peace-building such as social and economic rehabilitation of conflict zones and the establishment of a basis for their further development would facilitate confidence-building between the parties involved and create a favourable social and

economic environment for the achievement of a final political settlement. We believe that the United Nations should remain actively seized of this matter.

The creation of a special fund would allow the United Nations potential for post-conflict peace-building to be strengthened. "Development dividends" could provide one source of revenue for this. On the other hand, the fund could also consider the economic interests of the parties to the conflict, and on that basis develop relevant projects, thereby assisting in conflict prevention.

The uniqueness and indispensability of the United Nations as a central and multilateral mechanism of cooperation in the post-confrontational world must first and foremost be manifested in its leading role in the creation of a qualitatively new comprehensive system of security, stability and development. The most important role here must be played by a global system of economic security, the formation of which should run parallel with the development of the process of world integration.

A characteristic feature of today's world is that formerly isolated historico-geographic regions are gradually overcoming their isolation and are cooperating to create a shared global infrastructure of human activities. Therefore, regional economic unions should be viewed as a driving force of the mechanisms for building such an infrastructure.

For example, the Caucasus region clearly demonstrates the potential of the so-called graded model of global integration. I refer, in the first place, to subregional cooperation within the framework of a given region and, further, in the light of the geo-strategic situation of the Caucasus, to its role as a link for interregional cooperation, namely between Europe and Asia.

Such a structure for integration, such a global model is in keeping with the realities of our day. We believe that the coordinating role of the United Nations in this process can be very effective.

Such a vision of the role of the Caucasus region has already been embodied in the concept of the Euro-Asian corridor, a kind of Silk Road for the twenty-first century. This historic conduit for trade, the importance of which is continuing to grow and gain in recognition, is already working and proving its effectiveness.

Similar corridors present a unique opportunity for the establishment of new material and cultural values and for bringing economies and cultures together. On this basis, they must — and, unquestionably, will — also play an important role in the establishment and strengthening of stability in the region.

Georgia has been called upon to actively promote the implementation of this concept. Even a superficial glance at a map shows the strategic importance of geopolitical and geo-economic dimensions of this central conduit for world trade. Therefore, we express our readiness to cooperate with all those who are interested in making it a reality.

The broad functions of the United Nations as a universal organization are the basis for the initiatives spelled out by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". First and foremost, we believe there is a need to focus on the treaty defining the international legal profile of today's world order: the Charter of the United Nations. Conceived under specific circumstances, it provided a mechanism that was aimed, for the most part, at prevention and settlement of conflicts between States. As a result, the United Nations has often reacted inadequately to such challenges as the numerous conflicts occurring within States. The principles that constituted the basis for traditional peacekeeping operations, in particular the concept of consent of the parties, are often untenable in cases of so-called ethnic conflict. This leads us to the idea that the Charter to a great extent needs to be rethought and made to conform to current realities.

In this regard, Georgia supports the creation of a ministerial commission to study the necessity of fundamental reforms in the Charter and in those legal documents that define the mandates of the United Nations specialized agencies. Georgia also supports the proposal for the appointment of a First Under-Secretary-General who would be called upon to play a special role in ensuring the success of programmes and plans of the various functional sectors of the Secretariat.

Undoubtedly, the crux of the United Nations reforms is the enlargement of the Security Council and the improvement of the activities of the General Assembly and of the other main bodies. Also important is the question of the optimal reallocation of authority between the General Assembly and the Security Council. In this respect, we reaffirm our unwavering position concerning the inclusion of Germany and Japan among the permanent members of the Security Council and also concerning the enlargement of the Council, including adding one seat for the Eastern European countries.

We favour growing transparency in the work of the Security Council. From our point of view, it is important that concerned States be able to participate in informal consultations of the Council, at which substantive discussions take place and decisions are taken.

The international community should also be equipped with reliable tools of justice to enable it to react not only to unlawful actions of States but also to those of individuals who have perpetrated crimes against humanity. In this connection, we call upon all the Member States to do all they can to conclude successfully the diplomatic conference and to adopt a treaty on the establishment of an international criminal court by 1998.

In closing I would like to recall the initiative of the Secretary-General to hold a special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000, as a "millennium Assembly". Very little time remains before mankind enters the new millennium, and we must do everything we can to see to that the reformed United Nations becomes a genuinely new United Nations for the world order of the coming century. I am confident that Georgia, together with other States, will occupy a worthy place in it, as a democratic and prosperous country.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Dr. Kamal Kharrazi.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Persian; English text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me to express my felicitations to the President on his election and express the confidence that, with his wisdom and diplomatic skill, he will ably guide the fifty-second General Assembly towards tangible results. Let me also express my appreciation to his predecessor for his excellent work.

Due to lateness of the hour, I will present a brief version of my statement. The complete text will be distributed.

At the threshold of the third millennium and under the circumstances of unfolding interplay among not one or two but various powers in the shaping of new global decisions, international relations need a new doctrine, commensurate with the evolving conditions and emerging needs. The main objective of this doctrine is the gradual realization of a global civil society, a society where liberty and salvation harmoniously coincide to meet the spiritual and material needs of humanity in an institutionalized manner, and where comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development lies at the foundation of universal cooperation and participation.

The doctrine of global civil society is predicated on two major principles, the first being the institutionalization of the rule of law in domestic and international relations. The international community today, like its constituent Member States, simply cannot provide a peaceful and prosperous life for people through coercion, autocratic decisions and a cultural domination and hegemony. Therefore, the rule of law, as the very foundation of order and the relations among individuals and States, should be institutionalized.

The second major principle is that of empowerment and participation. Similar to the process of participation at the national level — where all individuals, regardless of colour, race, opinion, wealth or social status have an inalienable right to determine their own destiny — countries and regions with differing cultures and resources should enjoy the right and be empowered to participate at all stages of decision-making and policy implementation at the global scale.

Today, North and South constitute two complementary domains in a single global arena. Equilibrium and stability of the future world order depend, in large measure, on the South's contribution to the shaping of the norms governing future international relations.

In our view, we can move towards the gradual realization of a global civil society through institutionalization of these two fundamental principles and by committing ourselves to pluralism, tolerance, dialogue among civilizations, promotion of human rights, comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development, justice and equality of opportunities as the governing norms in our interactions.

The political philosophy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is in full accord with these fundamental foundations of the prospective global civil society. The domestic programme of the new administration is geared towards strengthening the foundations of civil society.

The main features and priorities of the new administration's foreign policy include the following: the expansion of relations with all countries on the basis of mutual respect, common interest and non-interference in the internal affairs of others; emphasis on the

institutionalization of international law as the foundation of global order and as the final arbiter among States; the establishment and strengthening of mechanisms of mutual confidence-building and security through regional cooperation and the negation of the presence and influence of foreign powers; the protection of all human rights and the rejection of attempts at selective and discriminatory abuse of human rights as instruments of policy; emphasis on the fundamental rights of oppressed individuals and nations, particularly the Palestinian people; the arresting of the arms race at the regional and global levels, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the control of conventional weapons; the strengthening of the bonds of amity and solidarity among Islamic and non-aligned countries; an active presence and constructive participation in the United Nations and other international organizations, with an effective contribution in international efforts on global issues such as arms control and disarmament, comprehensive and sustainable development, human rights, peacekeeping and combating terrorism and illicit drugs, as well as the reversal of unjust international arrangements; and, finally, defending the rights of Iranian citizens all over the world.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has adopted concrete measures at the regional and international levels in pursuit of these principled policies, and it is fully prepared to cooperate with all countries towards achieving common objectives in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The question of Palestine, which lies at the very heart of the Middle East crisis, represents the most vivid and persistent case of disregard for international law and the systematic violation of fundamental human rights of individuals and peoples. The Middle East crisis can be solved only through the full realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to self-determination, the return of refugees and the liberation of all occupied territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, southern Lebanon and the Syrian Golan. The experience of the past few years has made it abundantly clear that any scheme or proposal which fails to take into full account the realities in the region or the infamous Israeli patterns of behaviour is bound to fail.

It is indeed unfortunate that some outside powers deliberately misconstrue or misrepresent Iran's frank, open and objective exposé of the realities as support for terrorism and as opposition to peace and security in the region. I reiterate once again that the Islamic Republic of Iran also seeks peace and stability in the Middle East — a just and lasting peace that would receive regional consensus and that would cure this chronic crisis once and for all.

Our region has witnessed for nearly two decades the crisis in Afghanistan. There is, undoubtedly, no military solution to this tragedy; yet some warring factions have yet to realize this evident truth. Only through the establishment of a ceasefire, the cessation of foreign intervention, negotiations between all Afghan groups and the formation of a broad-based Government representing all Afghans can the crisis in Afghanistan find a lasting solution. My Government is determined to continue its humanitarian and peacemaking endeavours in Afghanistan in tandem with the United Nations Secretary-General and the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. I must draw the attention of the international community to the dire need for and the urgency of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.

The cold war generated a tendency in internal and external relations which required the existence of a real or imagined enemy. Escaping this state of mind and building a new world based on cooperation and the rule of law requires not only political will, but careful planning in order to foster confidence and to mitigate economic, security and social concerns at national and regional levels.

Confidence-building at national, regional and international levels, as an essential strategy to transform human relations, will not succeed in the absence of transparency in decision-making and the participation of all concerned. The antithesis of universal participation in decision-making and law-based cooperation at the international level is unilateralism. This phenomenon finds its manifestations in various areas, including arms control, development, international trade, the environment and codification of new human rights norms.

The first and most effective step towards building confidence is the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, the reduction of conventional weapons, transparency in the field of armaments and the establishment of security and cooperation schemes in various regions of the globe. This endeavour requires the full and non-discriminatory implementation of existing undertakings in the area of disarmament and security and the development of new rules to address universally accepted priorities, as well as security requirements of the international community and its members.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, on the basis of Islamic principles, considers weapons of mass destruction inhumane and illegitimate. Officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have repeatedly confirmed the fact that Iran's nuclear activities are performed within the framework of the Agency's regulations and that they follow peaceful objectives. Despite these clear facts, some Governments have embarked upon a barrage of false and baseless accusations against Iran during the past few years. Yet propaganda campaigns of public deception will certainly not change regional realities on the ground. It is self-evident that the lack of security in the Middle East is rooted in Israel's militarism and its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, which have thwarted all disarmament initiatives and mechanisms in the region.

Furthermore, the unabated race for the acquisition of conventional weapons exacerbates the atmosphere of anxiety and mistrust. The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is founded on peace, self-restraint, confidence-building and the reduction and elimination of tension, particularly within our region. I wish to inform the Assembly frankly and sincerely that of all the countries of the Middle East, Iran allocates the lowest percentage of its budget to its military. In 1995 and 1996, only 3.3 per cent of our gross domestic product was spent on defence. We continue to be ready for any regionally acceptable understanding on further reductions in defence budgets such that the security concerns of large and small countries alike are fully addressed.

The highest foreign policy priority of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to make every effort to strengthen trust and confidence and to build peace in our immediate neighbourhood, which in cases such as Tajikistan has achieved encouraging results. In our region, the Economic Cooperation Organization has also contributed to the expansion and consolidation of relations among its member States through the adoption of common positions and by playing an active role in the field of economic and technical cooperation.

In the Persian Gulf area, only cooperation and collective participation can bring about security and stability for all countries in the region. Taking full advantage of historical affinities, cultural ties and religious bonds and sparing no effort to utilize in an efficient and coordinated manner the human and natural potential and resources of the region constitute the single best long-term guarantee of security and tranquillity. Iran — as the biggest country in the region, enjoying a historical depth of several millennia combined with the richness of Islamic civilization — does not need to engage in any arms build-up or competition. Our message to our neighbours is one of friendship and fraternity, and we shall warmly welcome any initiative to strengthen the foundations of confidence and cooperation in the region.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, which in December will be hosting the eighth Islamic summit, is of the view that on the threshold of the twenty-first century, the primary task of the summit will be to foster mutual confidence and establish mechanisms for cooperation and coordination in various fields among Islamic countries. This will undoubtedly contribute to the further strengthening of the foundations of lasting international security and stability.

Terrorism is the wicked result of widespread lawlessness and the violent obstruction of public participation, which in its various forms and manifestations threatens human societies at the national, regional and international levels. The political exploitation of this international problem, through hurling unfounded allegations in order to advance certain ulterior motives or cover up deficiencies in domestic or external policy, is no less dangerous than terrorism itself. These two elements together diminish trust, stability and security at the regional and the international levels.

Resolution of this destructive problem requires a determined avoidance of sensationalism and demagoguery on the one hand, and a concerted international attempt to find practical measures to combat terrorism that are reasonable, objective and realistic on the other. More important, our collective success requires the non-selective, universal and law-based application of agreed measures by relevant international organizations.

As a country that has suffered immensely from the inhuman phenomenon of terrorism in the post-revolution years, the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to take an active part in any international effort to combat this problem in a serious, comprehensive and principled manner.

The resolution of complex international problems and the realization of post-cold-war opportunities require the participation of all members of the international community in the decision-making process, on the basis of the rules and principles of international law. The United Nations is the institutional embodiment of both universal participation and the rule of law on the global scale. It is the only universal organization which, with the

help of an efficient and capable system, can move towards finding solutions to the problems of human society and responding to post-cold-war challenges. The magnitude of this task clearly points to the need to improve the efficiency of the Organization and to enhance its role by embarking on the transformation and reform of the major bodies, programmes and modes of operation of the Organization.

I should like to express appreciation for the Secretary-General's efforts to reinvigorate the Organization, and to assure him of our earnest desire to cooperate with him in the process of restructuring the United Nations into a more efficient, capable and reliable institution responsive to the needs and views of all its Members. In our opinion, the extensive scope and implications of the measures envisaged in the Secretary-General's report of 16 July make it imperative for the General Assembly to establish working groups to examine the report thoroughly and in detail so that the views of all Member States are identified and taken into account.

There is no doubt that the current composition of the Security Council is remote from the state of international affairs today and is not acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the international community. In our opinion, any increase in the membership of the Security Council or reform of its working methods will have to take the true role and concerns of the developing countries into account. Moreover, reform of the working methods of the Security Council should not be contingent upon resolution of the question of the increase in the membership of the Council; they are two distinct subjects and thus require two separate decisions.

The General Assembly is undoubtedly the highest and most representative organ of the United Nations, where all Members of the Organization enjoy an equal right to participate. This body, which comprises the entire membership, certainly has the right — and indeed the responsibility — to address each and every issue of global concern, including in particular those relating to international peace and security.

Expansion and broadening of the participatory base of the future global order on the basis of norms acceptable to all cultures and peoples is most conducive to building a better tomorrow, and to ensuring freedom, security, stability and sustainable development at the national, regional and international levels. The General Assembly, providing all Member States with the opportunity for full and equal participation in decision-making, is the most appropriate venue for dialogue, understanding and the adoption of coordinated international measures to build a better and a more equitable tomorrow.

As the new Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran assumes its responsibilities, I reiterate the willingness and full preparedness of my Government to take a constructive part in this collective endeavour through promoting dialogue, understanding, trust and solidarity.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.